

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUCAR 00552 101511Z

47

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FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1682

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 0552

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CPAS, OEXC, RO PFOR (VROMAN, ROBERT)

SUBJECT: ALLEGED ESPIONAGE CASE - VROMAN, ROBERT

REF: A) BUCHAREST 515; B) STATE 024329

1. DCM MET WITH MFA DIRECTOR OF THIRD DIRECTORATE CONSTANTIN OANCEA FEBRUARY 7 TO SEEK CLARIFICATION OF CHARGES AGAINST VROMAN. AMERICAN DESK OFFICR PETRESCU AND CONSOFF WERE ALSO PRESENT AT THE MEETING.

2. AFTER ALLOWING OANCEA OPPORTUNITY TO READ EMBASSY NOTE PRESENTED TO MINISTRY OF JUSTICE ON FEBRUARY 5 (BUCHAREST 515), DCM OPENED DISCUSSION BY UNDERSCORING SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH USG VIEWED MATTER. STATED HE HAD NOT SOUGHT MEETING TO DEBATE MERITS OF ROMANIAN LEGAL SYSTEM OR GUILT OR INNOCENCE OF VROMAN. BASIC PURPOSE WAS TO ALERT OANCEA TO GRAVITY WHICH USG ACCORDED SITUATION AND TO OUR CONCERN THAT MANNER WHICH GOR HAD HANDLED CASE TO DATE WAS A GUARANTEE OF POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS IN U.S. NOTED IT WAS FIRST TIME THAT SUCH CHARGES HAD BEEN MADE AGAINST AMCIT TO HIS KNOWLEDGE. STATED IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN TO AMERICAN PUBLIC HOW GOR WAS ABLE TO TRY AN AMCIT FOR ESPIONAGE, A SENTENCE FOR WHICH THE ULTIMATE PENALTY IS DEATH, WITHOUT LETTING THE ACCUSED KNOW WHAT THE CHARGES WERE.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BUCAR 00552 101511Z

SOLICITED OANCEA'S ASSISTANCE IN HEADING OFF THIS PROBLEM

BEFORE CASE BEGAN TO ATTRACT PUBLICITY.

3. DCM ALSO OBSERVED THAT CASE WOULD HAVE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON EFFORTS TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS FOR NEXT YEAR'S EXCHANGE PROGRAM, IF IT BECAME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE IN THE U.S. TIMING OF SUMMONS, SHORTLY AFTER NEW CULTURAL EXCHANGE AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED, WAS PARTICULARLY REGRETTABLE FROM THIS VIEW POINT.

4. DCM THEN SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED OANCEA'S SUPPORT IN OBTAINING STATEMENT OF CHARGES AGAINST VROMAN AND DETAILS BEHIND CRIMES IMPUTED TO HIM. ALSO ASKED THAT AN EMBOFF BE PERMITTED TO WITNESS THE PROCEEDINGS.

5. OANCEA REPLIED THIS WAS FIRST HE HAD HEARD ABOUT VROMAN CASE. HE PROMISED TO INVESTIGATE MATTER PROMPTLY AND BE BACK IN TOUCH WITH EMBASSY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. SAID HE THOUGHT IT AN ERROR TO ASCRIBE SUCH GRAND DIMENSIONS TO AFFAIR. CASE WAS NOT POLITICAL IN NATURE AND PARTICIPANTS OF EXCHANGE PROGRAM SHOULD NOT BE LINKED TO VROMAN'S TRIAL. PROGRAM WAS FOR "HONEST MEN", AND IF THE GOR HAD SUMMONED VROMAN FOR ESPIONAGE AND REVEALING STATE SECRETS, THEY NO DOUBT HAD GOOD REASON FOR DOING SO. OANCEA CONCLUDED BY OBSERVING THAT US-GOR HAVE MUTUAL OBLIGATION TO MAKE NEW CULTURAL ACCORD FUNCTION SMOOTHLY. THEY MUST NOT ALLOW THE BEHAVIOR OF ONE INDIVIDUAL TO AFFECT THAT OBLIGATION.

6. DCM RESPONDED THAT HIS RESPONSIBILITY AND OANCEA'S WAS TO DEAL WITH REALITIES. POTENTIALLY SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS OF VROMAN CASE WERE A REALITY, AND BOTH PARTIES THEREFORE HAD TO TREAT MATTER WITH UTMOST GRAVITY. HE REITERATED REQUEST THAT CHARGES AGAINST VROMAN BE SPECIFIED AND THAT SUPPORTING PROOF OF ALLEGATIONS BE PRODUCED. OANCEA AGAIN PROMISED TO LOOK INTO MATTER IMMEDIATELY AND INFORM EMBASSY.

7. LATER IN DAY DCM AND CONOFF CALLED ON DEPUTY DIRECTOR ANDREI GOICEA OF MFA CONSULAR DIRECTORATE AND MADE SIMILAR PRESENTATION. HE ALSO CLAIMED BE UNAWARE OF CASE AND PROMISED PROMPT INVESTIGATION.

8. COMMENT: IT WAS OBVIOUS OANCEA WAS SURPRISED BY THIS
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BUCAR 00552 101511Z

MATTER. DESPITE HIS EFFORT TO DOWN PLAY CASE IT WAS EQUALLY CLEAR HE FULLY GRASPED SERIOUSNESS OF SITUATION AND ITS POTENTIAL POLITICAL IMPACT. PROBLEM NOW FOR MFA (AND BY EXTENSION FOR EMBASSY) IS THAT WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE IN A CASE OF THIS SORT, RELATIVE WEIGHT OF MFA AGAINST SECURITY AGENCIES AND MILITARY TRIBUNAL MAY BE INSUFFICIENT TO FORCE LATTER TO BRING CASE OUT INTO THE OPEN.
BARNES

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